

The Register

winter 2001





The Register

Winter 2001

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Boston Latin School
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The Register is published twice a year by the students of Boston Latin School. Students in Classes I through VI are invited to submit original writing and artwork. Pieces are selected by the Editorial Board of *The Register* on the basis of quality, not name recognition; the writers of all pieces remain anonymous to the Editorial Board during the selection process to ensure that no one is given an unfair advantage.

For this Winter issue, we received well over 200 submissions. We encourage all artists, photographers and writers to keep practicing their art and providing us with such a wealth of outstanding works from which to choose.

The Register

Winter 2001

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A R T C R E D I T S

Promise

I will never write you a love poem.

I will never describe the way you make me feel in my crude phrases and stanzas.

I will not set down one word about your eyes, or your smile, or the careless way your hair falls
in front of your face.

Our conversations will never be recorded, not the silly anecdotes or the pensive reflections,
or the comfortable silence that comes between us when I lean my head on your shoulder.

I will never pick up a pencil to write about how you always make me smile, or sometimes make
me cry.

It will certainly never be a love poem, never a wish that I could tell you the way I feel so
strongly, or a hope that you tell me first.

I will never fashion you a sonnet,
or a ballad,
or a rhyme.

I will never write you a poem.

—Rose Costello, I

Love: A Reasonable Approach

Most stories of
tragic because the pair was

young love are
too young and too foolish.

"They were young and stupid they didn't know better." Romeo and Juliet are
a fine example, if you read carefully, of two moronic lustful kids who rushed into mar-
riage basically on the premise that they both found the other attractive. Luckily you and
I have decided to be young, but wise. We were taught, listened well, and we learned that
being young meant lust, passion, confusion, drunken mistakes, shallow couplehood, and
flings on the rebound. No one is in love, not until they are at least twenty-five or twenty-
seven, and have a good job, a nice car, and are paying off their student loans, those
people are in love. So we know for now we can wait to say those three stupid words. In
fifteen years, I'll find you and we'll get married and have our two kids, boy first then
girl. We'll have money put aside for the orthodontist, a down payment on a reliable
Camry, and we'll fall in love then. Because you can control feelings with logic. My
racing heart, my lustful eyes, my quaking limbs can all be placated by logic, I hope.

Because I'm busy, and you've got too much to do, and we both have an agenda,
and life's too crazy now for love. Besides, everyone says love fades,
so can't we save it 'til later? Reserve it for when we've become so
mechanical and unfeeling that only our love can redeem us, can't
we save it 'til then? And then when that love fades, which
it must because no bond is everlasting, we will be
old and worn and accomplished enough,
and we can rest together with our
nice nest egg because

we planned
well.

—Zoe Weinstein, II



Uber Asian

"You so smaaht, why don't you do computer?"

- quotation from Kevin So, imitating his mother's career suggestion in place of his being a musician.

Just because I'm Asian doesn't mean I'm interested in math and science by default. "So you're a math major. . .?" and later, "Oh, well you looked like one." I "looked" like one. Nothing about my person would suggest a math major. I wasn't carrying a math book or my trusty TI-86; I wasn't even wearing the green MIT t-shirt my brother won. I was at the beach. In shorts and bare feet, digging in the sand with a neon green frisbee. Harmless, but I wish people would ask instead of assuming.

I hate Disney's Mulan and how a girl with cornsilk locks and blue eyes gets to model the merchandise, hock plastic tea sets (made in China), and sell McDonalds' greasy fare, spouting some "Honorable Father" junk. At the end of the commercial, Ronald McDonald karate chops the golden M with a resounding "hiiiya!" Never mind that karate is Japanese. All those dang Asians are the same anyway, right?

Chinoiserie has come into fashion. Again. Clothing and accessories emblazoned with Chinese characters jumbled together into awkwardly senseless phrases, like one that can be translated loosely as "soul of the dead serene" all for consumers of ethnic kitsch in good ol' US of A.

I remember he still held his mother's hand. Remarking loudly with a child's drawl about the "Chinese people" on the train, he asked his mom whether the train was going to China. At the Hynes Convention Center/ICA, two Asian girls with BLS-style backpacks got off and the mother and little boy in blue overalls did too. As the girls went up the escalator, the mom walked onto the landing with the kid, who shouted, "Hey Chinese people! This train doesn't go to China! Hey Chinese people!" She didn't even chide her loud, rude son.

Rude, insensitive children tend to grow into nasty boorish adults. Like that white middle-aged male in Copley, breath reeking of alcohol, who after assuring I was "Vietnamese or somethin'" felt the need to deny that I was a valid citizen ("That's bullshit!" he exclaimed) and shared his inebriated view of "We built this country. . . long before you people came" and how "My ancestors came over on the Mayflower!" I feel sickened, but find strength and comfort in my stereotyped, angry-young-feminist-minority role.

-Sue Yee Lee, I

Time

Sneakers and socks behind them, they reclined opposite each other, both on immense rocks, both with their feet in the soothing water. The shallow, but dangerous river surged downstream, but that was the only thing that seemed to have a destination to rush off to. Everything else around them was so serene and tranquil. Mountains formed walls around their world. The clouds hung low to create a dreamy and comfortable summer day. The air was immaculately pure as if it was therapeutic to take a breath.

She found it strange sitting across from him at the locale she named her favorite place to be. Two years ago, they only remembered each other as childhood friends, never on the verge of forgetting each other's existence. Today, they had driven north for two hours, just so she could share her beloved place with him.

"Hey, what time is it?" she shouted to him. She was competing with the clamorous noise of the water striking the rocks, sometimes moving the smaller ones downstream. Having lost her watch two months ago, she hadn't gotten around to replacing it yet. He glanced down at his wrist.

"3:37," he replied. It perplexed her that he always had to be so exact with the time, but she loved it. It was a part of his quirky personality, the one no one truly appreciated, except for her.

"Can we stay a while longer?" she asked in an almost beseeching tone.

"Sure. . .I've got nowhere else to be," he assured her, playing it off as if he had penciled the time into his Day Runner for her.

She smiled an understood inner laugh as she adjusted her sunglasses. The sun wasn't quite out, but the milieu was bright and made her squint. She altered her position on the boulder she was atop, lounging comfortably. She watched him and thought about the drive back to the city. She thought about him and if things would go back to being the same, or if they would change.

Back in the city, she hardly saw him. They talked on the phone periodically, but conflicting schedules made it difficult to find the time to see one another. They were lucky to have this one Sunday to spend together in her precious New Hampshire.

She thought about when they were younger, when they saw each other everyday. How things had changed so quickly, but predictably. She often reminisced about her childhood, thus of him, but it was different thinking about it while watching him; it was special.

He had transformed from a naïve child with brown hair and freckles to a young adult with the same appearance. She never thought he had changed much on the outside. Maybe just grew a little taller. He still had a sweet face, with wide, eager eyes. . .and a smile that could cheer her up regardless of whether or not she was in one of her crabby moods. However, on the inside, he was more mature. When they first met, he was just another boy in her kindergarten class. In fact, the only thing that set him apart from the others was that he was the one standing next to the boy who was picking his nose while the class picture was being taken. A couple of years after that infamous snapshot was taken, he became her friend. Throughout the course of their childhood together, he had experimented with being like some of the other boys: rude and conceited, but he came back to his senses and to himself.

Soon, she was overcome with the feeling of too many flashbacks of memories almost forgotten. She felt tears stinging her lower eyelid, desiring a plunge down her cheek, but they were held back by pride or confusion, or both, because she couldn't. . .she just couldn't cry for no reason, or some reason known only to the deepest parts of herself that wouldn't even let her in on the secret.

"When do you want to leave?" he asked her, interrupting her recollection and discomfort.

"What time is it now?" she inquired once again, this time, swallowing as if she was hiding her distress in her throat.

"3:44," he answered.

"We can go now," she said as she made her way back to dry land.

The rocks were slippery beneath her feet. She was careful not to step on a wobbly stone that would hurl her into the river. He reached out and grabbed her hand to help her back to shore.

"Thanks," she uttered, looking into the same hazel eyes she knew almost a decade ago.

"No problem," he answered with a half-smile, looking back at her.

They sat on the log where their footwear was placed and made plans for the rest of the day while waiting for their feet to dry. She wiped the sand away from in between her toes. On went their socks and their sneakers, and they stood up.

"That was fun," she declared, as they made their way to the car. "Maybe we'll conquer Maine next weekend," she chuckled.

"I'll try to pencil it in."

—Katarina Yee, II



Lost and Blind

It is dark.
She is scared.
She is running.
She is lost.
She is crying. . .crying. . .crying

She is only a little girl.
She is only seven years old.
And she is beautiful.

She ran up to an old man sitting on a bench. She pulled at the hands of an old man, whose eyes were staring at the sky. She remembered her mother telling her not to talk to strangers. But Fear has left her no choice.

"Excuse me. . .mister. . .b. . .but. . .can you help me find my way home? I-I'm really scared. I d. . .d. . . don't know where I am."

The old man embraced her, giving her a feeling of safety, as tears rolled down her pink cheeks. The old man said, "Don't cry little girl. Tell me where you live. I will bring you back to your parents."

Looking into the eyes of this man, she knew he was not lying. She remembered her mother telling her never to trust strangers. But something in this man's eyes ensured her he would do no harm. The girl replied, "I. . .I live at 34 Garden Street. D. . .Do you know h. . .how to get there?"

"I certainly do," answered the man, "but Garden Street is pretty far away from here. Now how did you end up here in the first place?" Tears formed in her eyes again and she remained silent. "I shouldn't be asking you questions. I'm probably scaring you. C'mon let's get you back to your parents. What's your name?"

"It's K-Katie."

"Katie. . .what a beautiful name. OK, Katie. Hold my hand and we'll get you back home safely."

There was something very strange about this man. Katie trusted him. Maybe it was his soothing voice. Or maybe it was the soft touch of his hand. No. Can't be. It was definitely his eyes. Something in this man's eyes told Katie that she would be safe with him.

On their way, the old man talked to Katie. He seemed very cheerful and enlightening. "Look at the lights in this city. It's beautiful, isn't it? And look at the man selling flowers across the street. He sure has a big smile. I wonder why he's selling flowers so late. And look at the moon, Katie. Ever notice that if you stare at the moon for a long time, it looks like it's getting closer? See that little girl across the street? She has the exact same dress you have on. . ."

Katie remained silent. She felt secure, and that was all she needed. She had never seen this man before, but it was as if he knew exactly what to say to calm her down. She walked slowly next to the old man, holding his soft hand. They neared her house and Katie started to smile. This man had indeed saved her. They walked up to the doorstep and rang the doorbell. An anxious mother opened the door and tears flooded her eyes when she saw Katie safe and sound.

"Oh, my god! Where have you been? We were so worried about you. Don't you ever run off like that again." Embracing, they exchanged hugs and kisses. The mother stood up and said, "I. . .I. . .don't know what to say. Thank you! Thank you so much, sir."

"It was my pleasure," the old man responded, "but before I go, I have something to tell you. Your daughter has VERY beautiful eyes. . ."

"Why. . .thank you," the confused mother replied.

"I wish I had eyes just as beautiful. No. That's too much to ask. I simply wish I had eyes. For you see, Ma'am, I am nothing but a blind man. . ."

The old man departs.

It is dark.

But darkness is the only thing he ever sees. . .

. . .so he has gotten quite used to it.

—Sui Li, II





summertime

twilight where earth meets life
air the temperature of tranquility
breeze blows gentle meditation past me
simple stone dock
three girls
six legs dangle carefree above splashes
two fishing rods, no fish
Janis Joplin drives her heart through soft
static of the local station
amorous aroma of ocean near
darkness embraces sky and water around
and of me
distant never-ending evergreens shadow the
starry
reflection
beyond, the world
life discovers freedom in vivacious dance
of nature
our still bodies rise with each breath
peace inside us

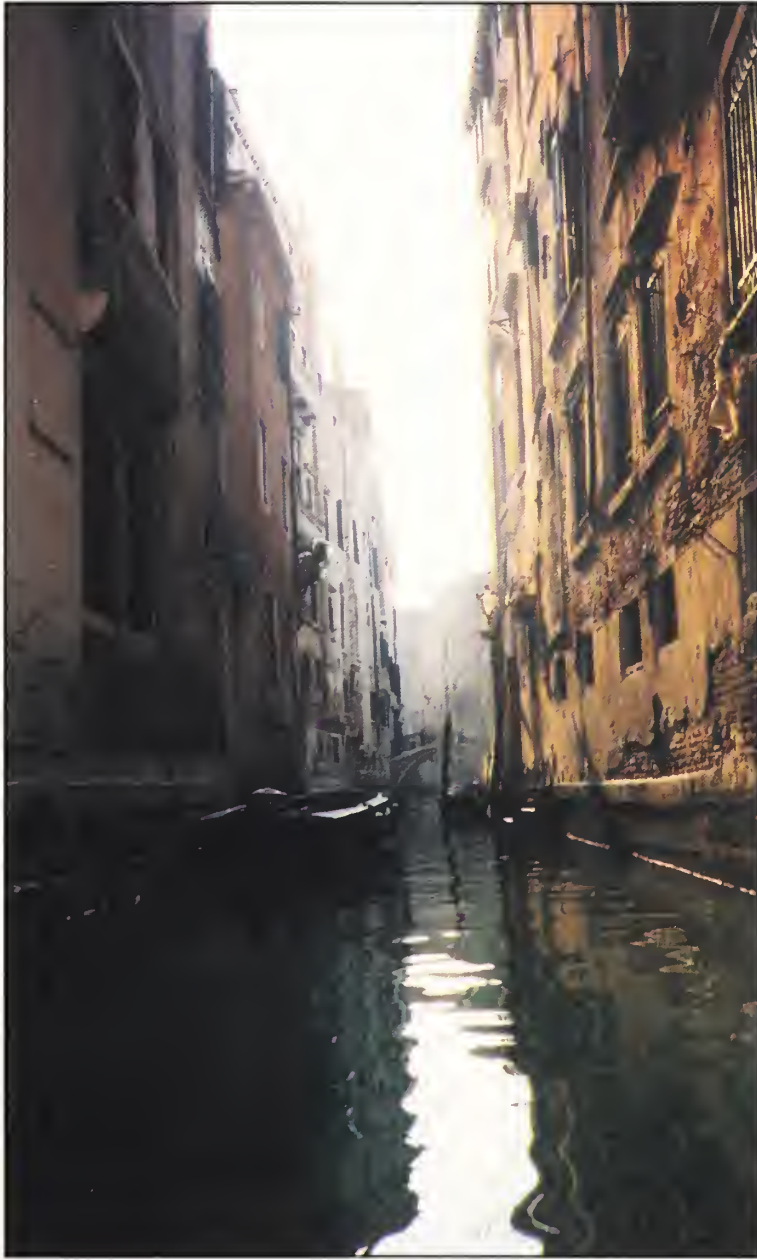
—Amanda Martin, II

映山紅

吳美頌



B r e a t h l e s s



When you speak
I listen to the words
and the
silence.
I dance on the
divine
fire
of your religion.
Mistaken never
by the
complexity
of your mind.
Amazed,
I follow you
deeper
and deeper.
The broken bottoms
of my
shredded
shoes
giving way
to
bare
souls,
finally free
to feel
the soft earth,
to carry
the weight
of my body.
Solid
as I move to
your
music.
Staring
down
into dreams,
mesmerized
by thoughts of
a
mind
so intricately
beautiful.
I am
left
breathless.

—Alexandra Hanson, II

Neonatal Senility

My cat was 900 years old at birth. This makes his current age pretty impressive as he has lived seventeen human years since. Being perpetually old has been pretty rough on him, through his infant senility, teenage rheumatism, and adult arthritis. Now that he's approaching "ancient," one would think that my family would be simply counting the days before he wandered out into traffic or died peacefully in his sleep, but we are quite sure that he has another couple hundred cat years ahead of him.

You see, this cat was the runt of the litter and was not expected to live much longer than a few days. When my parents adopted a strong, strapping young lad of a kitten, they decided to adopt the runt as well, assuming that by the end of the week, they'd only have one cat. When my father saw the runt's wizened face, enormous ears, and sage demeanor, he declared, "His name is Yoda." (Interestingly enough, the other cat my parents adopted was named Luke Skywalker, an adventurous young cat who met his end while bounding headlong into the street. We're still not sure if he succeeded in his mission to destroy the Deathstar, that is, a pickup truck, but we do know that he had to sacrifice his life for the Rebel Alliance.)

Yoda was taken back to my parents' apartment where he was treated as one treats anyone who will not be in this world for much longer. They were very nice to him, and very supportive, assuring him that dying isn't so bad; it's a natural part of life. However, Yoda completed that entire week. And the next one. In fact, he outlived his brother Luke, the next two cats we had, Mimi and Didi, and is currently outliving an obese cat named Samoa and an energetic Bichon.

Now, I can't remember much about Yoda as a kitten, for he was born the year before I was, but my earliest memories of him are probably from when I was about five, which would have made him six in human years. Now, for those of you who know cats, you know that six is not very old for a feline. Yet Yoda had already reached senility. He would bump into walls, fall over when trying to walk in a straight line, and get lost on his way to the kitchen from an adjacent room. You know, normal old people stuff. There was a period of time when my parents had to hold him up while he ate so that he wouldn't lose his balance and topple over sideways. Every time he'd go through one of these phases, we'd say to ourselves, "It's just a matter of days now. . ." After about ten years of this, we figured out that Yoda wasn't planning on going anywhere.

Yoda is now almost entirely deaf. You could stand behind him and yell his name until you were blue in the face and he wouldn't hear you. He is almost entirely blind. When he comes up the basement stairs (very slowly) for dinner, he often walks right past his food dish and has to double back and wander around until one of us notices and places him in front of his dish. His slow, aged walk has turned into a hobble. We think that his joints hurt and hence he doesn't bend his back knees when he walks. If anyone picks him up, since he can't see where he's being brought and he doesn't know who's holding him, he automatically sticks out his claws (and consequently gets them stuck on clothing, blankets, and furniture) and splays his limbs out, as if this will somehow defend him from unseen enemies when he's flying through the air. When he wants to be let out, he goes and sits in front of the door, not making a sound, simply staring at the door, harnessing The Force, willing the door to move. The Force usually manifests itself in the form of some human finally noticing and opening the door, but Yoda can't see, so what difference does it make to him?

Although it may sound as if Yoda is finally losing it, I think he's doing pretty well for someone with at least 1000 cat years under his belt. As Yoda says, "When 900 years old you reach, look this good you will not."

In Memoriam

Yoda April 1983-December 2000



—Liz Johnson, II

ph ho, up in our loft, overlooking the chapel
the far lights glance off the stained glass onto our hearts,
the organ is silent, but our whispers are many
hushed tones in the house of comfort, home of Father.

suddenly one voice starts out a familiar song
two more join and the sound rings lonely and clear
in the small domed shelter we have occupied.
and then one by one more voices come:

Harmony born again and again as we all take our own part.
now the sound is warm and full and wraps 'round
the pews and the statues and the altar and around us

It is our own type of prayer.
It is our own tribute.

more voice break off the melody and
improvise a third harmony, a fourth, deviating
that opens our throats even wider still; eyes
rests. our voices mount higher staffs, the
and builds
and builds
and builds

and would burst itself in choral ecstasy to
gorgeous resolution of our praise
and would break!! break!
Break!

BREAK!

but we were
silenced.
and so the song,
stopped
as abruptly as had
begun,
hung
unfinished in the rafters,
as we blinked back shock
in a pulsating
stillness.

from the song to cause a joyous crash tone
close, necks tilt back, smiles form during
intensity builds

break upon the stone walls, break into a

-Michelle Whitaker, II

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Light on Water

The distant crashing of wave against rock, the insistent hum of the water, the constant rush of wind and spray and sand. Sapphire sky, air that shimmers with a sparkle characteristic to the sea, sunlight that sluices the horizon clean and silhouettes the shore with a golden halo. A white wake of bubbles behind the red stern of my boat, a glittering white tower of granite looming in front. I extend my neck all the way back and lean against my seat. Azure water gleams in all directions. The environment is alien; I could be one-hundred-and-a-half miles out from the distant beach instead of the actual one-and-a-half. A gull screeches and I start suddenly, lift my paddle and dip it down in a familiar, practiced move. Smooth muscles pull from my shoulder, and I approach the lighthouse.

The white stone almost blinding in the clear light, the tower dwarfs the scarlet smear of my kayak. I think to myself that at this distance, I am totally invisible to any on-shore watchers. There are no rocks to be seen, no boats, nothing except for one tiny slip of a white sail no bigger than a fingernail paring. If I resist the temptation to look back at shore over my shoulder, I can imagine myself alone in the world, single and sole except for this one white pillar of granite. Sloping gracefully it rises, stretches, climbs improbably out of the blue water, a spear of white light rising suddenly straight out of the sea.

All around me, the water reaches out, reaches out, reaches up to encircle the sky. Flat and blue sea mirrors flat and blue sky, all sense of depth and dimension lost as my eyes adjust to the ploy of sunbeams on water. The first impression here is one of clean, pure light. There are no distractions, no shadows, no doubts; just white radiance that washes everything clean, leaving the outline of the lighthouse crisp against the contrast of the ocean. For a moment I am confused does this luminosity come from the sky or the sea? And then the waves reach up to embrace the bow of my boat, and I no longer have time to think before I am caught up in the flow of water.

The current pulls at my boat, inviting it to play in the surf, and willingly it accepts the challenge, turning away from the lighthouse. I look back for one last look and breathe deeply, licking salty water from my lip. Held fast by this wet sea of dappled light, I reluctantly allow the tide to send me surely back towards shore.

—Alison Damaskos, II



A Kiss Good-Bye

I didn't tell her I loved her this morning;
I didn't even kiss her good-bye;
I left the house without a sound
Ignoring her sad little sigh.

Once again, we'd had an argument
but I don't even remember why.
All I know is that we were both mad
And that I didn't kiss her good bye.

She stood at the doorway
as I packed my bag for school.
She tried to give me a hug
But I knew it wouldn't "be cool."

When she woke me this morning,
for no reason at all,
I gave her the silent treatment,
so it seemed like she was speaking to a wall.

I found pleasure in seeing her upset,
I thought of the greatest insults with my wit.
It wasn't until the end of the day
That I realized it wasn't really worth it.

Because during the day I remembered
All the walks and talks we'd had
I thought of the laughs as well as the tears
And I couldn't help but feel sad.

I promised myself not to start a fight again,
A promise I intended to keep.
But my dreams were shattered around lunchtime
because what I found out made me weep and weep.

Ms, Kelley came to my classroom
And asked if I could come outside.
With a puzzled expression, I walked
towards her
and what she told me I immediately
denied.

My mother had been in a car crash
While she was driving to school today.
Nana said she was only coming
Because she had something to say.

All she wanted was to apologize
For the fight that I, in my mind, had
started.
And now it's too late for apologies
Because in death she has now departed.

I feel half my soul is gone,
Half of me is forsaken
Because Mom just meant too much to me
And now my reason to live has been
taken.

I only wish I had the chance,
The chance to put her hands in mine;
To return those lost hugs and hellos
And to kiss her good-bye one last time.

—Alyson Sheehan, V

Untitled

A young boy hides in the corner as he watches three soldiers tear his home apart. His mother screams in the opposite corner of the room as the soldiers hassle her husband to give the whereabouts of his son. She is confused and hysterical. Her eyes, full of fear, dart around the room searching for her only child. She spots him under a small table covered with prayer flags. She can see his small face covered in tears through the screenlike material. A broad faced soldier sees her looking at the table; he shouts and looks deep into her tortured eyes. He senses her panic and understands her struggle. Inside his heart beats faster with every bit of descending hope that falls from her face. At that moment everything seems so complicated to him, but in fact it's all too simple; he is just following orders.

A nun is caught prostrating in a prison cell. The guards storm the dark room seizing her arms, forcing her onto her bound feet. They bring her through a long narrow corridor into a large room. The room is empty except for a large bucket filled with water and ice. The guards lift the elderly nun into the bucket, forcing her to kneel in it as a punishment for praying.

A lonely woman, three months pregnant, stands in an endless line of women, all like herself. She is cold and tired from a lengthy trek from her home to the Chinese hospital. She finally steps through the door into an office with three men. They lie her on the metal table, holding her down as they destroy the baby inside of her. They sterilize her to prevent her from giving birth again.

The soldier walks over to the table where the boy is hiding. His giant fist grabs the six-year-olds fleshy hand, pulling him out into the street. As the soldiers leave the cottage, the boy looks back at his parents. His mother collapses on the ground and his father lunges towards his son. A soldier tackles him as the others pull the boy into the car. The boy is placed under a sheet as the car speeds away from his vandalized home. Facing backward, his wet eyes peek through the garment at his parents, his home, his life.

The nun violently shivers, but continues to pray. They take her out of the metal bin and attach electrodes to the tips of her pruned fingers. She cries for her salvation, the salvation of her country. They electrocute the nun, shocking her freedom, the plight of her people, but not their will to overcome. Inside she forgives them for her pain. This forgiveness is what keeps her alive.

The woman, lying in a pool of her own blood, continues idle, looking up at the ceiling. Through a crack in the cement she can see heaven. Her baby is looking down at her torn body. It knows she will survive. It knows its country will survive. It knows its people will survive. It knows it will be back on earth soon enough to dispel the misery of the world.

In 1950, Tibet was invaded by Chinese troops, which resulted in the complete overthrow of the Tibetan government. The Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of Tibet, was forced to flee his own country. On account of China's re-population of Tibet, Tibetans have become a minority in their own land. Chinese has become the official language. One in twenty monks are still allowed to practice, but only under the strict supervision of the Chinese government. For the mere practicing of religion, nuns are sent to prisons and are subjected to severe torture. This isolated and magnificent region and its unique wildlife have been devastated by pollution and major industrial expansions. Tibetan culture will not survive under these extreme conditions.

Since the invasion, 1.2 out of 6 million Tibetans have been killed, and the number grows higher each day. Over 6,000 monasteries and shrines have been destroyed. Thousands of innocent Tibetans have been imprisoned for peacefully expressing their political aspirations. Freedoms of speech, religion, and press have been abolished. Women are routinely subjected to forced sterilization and abortions. There is also proof that Chinese authorities captured the Panchen Lama, a six-year-old boy, the second in authority under the Dalai Lama in Tibet. The Panchen Lama died while in Chinese custody in 1999. The causes of his death are still unknown.

As a boy,
a leader,
searches for the silhouette of his parents
through thick fog in the distance;
As a nun prays for her freedom in a bucket of sorrow;
As a woman's hope is torn from her womb;
Our search, our prayers, and our hope continue,
and will not cease until human justice prevails.

—Jon Gass, Jr. 1

The Babysitters

Tears streaming down her once carefully painted face, now streaked with blue mascara and hot pink blush, Pam ran across the lawn, tripping over the purple power wheels and overused skip-it standing in her way. I watched as she got into her white station wagon and drove off. Success once again. In two years, I had managed to cause twenty babysitters to quit; Pam was the twenty-first.

When I was five I decided that five years of babysitters was five too many. I hated the concept of someone being paid to tell me what to do, and I couldn't understand why my parents would employ sixteen-year-old girls to talk on the phone, eat chips, watch TV and yell at me. At seven, I had mastered these first three tasks quite successfully, and I was quite certain that yelling at one of my Barbie dolls or perhaps the wall would produce the same results as yelling at me did, none. What do you know? I was already completely qualified.

Every time I brought it up with my parents, they would dismiss the idea. "You're too young," they would say. "You need someone to take care of you while we're not home." My parents obviously didn't know about the quality of care babysitters gave back in 1989. Under the supervision of babysitters my sister and I built a bridge from bunk bed to bunk bed with a sheet. We slid down our staircase in sleeping bags and put stuffed animals on the ceiling fan to see how far they would go and how much it would hurt if one hit us. We were extremely well behaved and acted in such a manner solely to teach a simple lesson: WE DID NOT NEED BABYSITTERS.

I was surprised by how difficult it was to get rid of Pam. She wore her hair real high, usually tied with a lime green scrunchie, and lots of make-up. She looked tough, at least tougher than a seven-year-old. And so on day two of her babysitting career at what some former employees liked to call "baby-sitter ****," with the help of my younger sister, I tested just how much she could handle. Fully loaded with stuffed animals and pillows, we bombarded her from behind. She laughed, yelling, "pillow fight." Strike one. Our next

plan, however, to screech and yell at the top of our lungs was virtually fool proof. My sister and I somehow managed to sustain enough energy (and cookies) to screech at the top of our lungs for 54 minutes straight, surely a record somewhere. With pounding headaches and aching bellies, my sister and I retired to our room, disappointed but not defeated. Just when I thought Pam was made of steel, she crumbled. A relatively innocent comment had knocked her over the edge and she was calling my mom in hysterics. "You shouldn't make personal phone calls," I told her and before I knew it, mom was on babysitter interview number twenty-two.

After that it was getting to the point where babysitters would interview us, and so mom called upon the family. Grandpa was the first to take on this hopeless task; he had potential. However, the incident with my sister's sleepwalking and the silverware marked the end of his babysitting career. Next was my cousin Sabrina who always watched MTV. She had long hair, an easy target, and so for the sake of her scalp she retired after only three encounters. I told mom from the beginning that babysitters, even the family kind, were completely and utterly not wanted. And so they kept coming and within days kept going.

When I was eleven my mom employed the final babysitter. Her name was June, and she had a child of her own. She was in her thirties and unbreakable. For seven months she came every week; through temper tantrums and screaming matches she endured. Through carpools and even face-to-face confrontations she endured. It seemed as if I was never to get rid of this final plague on my freedom, this ever-cheerful blond-haired smile. But one day she too left in tears, never to return as a babysitter. Every now and then I see my old babysitters and they tell me how awful I was. We laugh about it now, and some have even asked me to babysit for their children. They understood. All seven-year-olds need their independence.

—Lauren Gilmore, 1



Little BIG World

i fell if you remember. clap clap clapped
 on the cobblestones, on the actors' ears.
 felt rum and coke dynasties dividing,
 facilitating. shoes on telephone wires.
but god you're beautiful. on elephant
 rocks. *so much more than me.* on time
 for mother's stumble into the green
 parquet they ruled in 1986. into clap clap
 clapping. *god it hurts.* banging my knee
 into the chair you can't quite sit on, can't
 quite understand. left me here with
 faded, fading emerald eyes, round stic
 med/moy USA imagination. scratch
 scratch scratch it goes around. heart in
 hand. shaking cause I can't grasp, I can't
 breathe with your name in my throat; on
 my tongue; exploding from the ground,
 raining on the church with boarded
 windows, church we're scared to look at.
 exploding in my face, knocking back in
 the air. *oh god you're beautiful. it hurts.*
 seeing red, seeing GREEN. turning
 around seeing consequence coming.
 screaming with delightful anticipation.
 almost there now, inches from your eyes,
 casting shadows in the dark. on wobbly
 kneed mothers. shadows in your closet.
 Yes. clap clap clap almost there, drink it
 up, they lost this year they're horrible
 just like my mother's hospital fall.
 scratch scratch scratch on my face on his
 blue black hands looking like dog bites
 with his hair on fire RED means she's
 happy means she's married means my
 god we won't be beautiful for ever.
 rushing now. past my father's out
 stretched hand, I see an old friend; her
 hair up, pulled back, pulling her skin
 over her bones like god making me. I
remember. felt it in my stomach. *your*
monarch butterflies that flew away. felt
 your hand burn my neck as you grasp
 and take hold screaming out their names,
 out your prayers, but you close your
 eyes. . .we're almost that now...you look
 confused. . .we fell, if you remember.

*we'll have a break for now between each
 other. i whispered something in the morning.
 whispered that the night can cloud your
 judgment. how i wish I'd never said what we
 remembered. It's funny, you see, because it's
 true. We thought she died. Showing their
 tricks to me . And I grin because you were
 never wrong. I remember. The sun on the
 street that day, when we crouched down,
 scratched the pavement, looking at time.
 Remember the rain that came eventually.
 Sent them away. Left the door ajar, and I
 could hear her screaming. Turning around.
 And I'm haunted. She said, "I haven't been
 here in years." And started again Broke it
 off. I remember that bodies resting in mo-
 tion shine when we look at them in such a way.
 Just the right way.*

*Remember that she told me of your mirror.
 That smile, so unsure, looking back at all of
 us. Holding me up saying hello to myself
 Never knowing that someday I would reach,
 someday you'd be old and tired and gray and
 just the same. Remembering that someday
 already came. Always comes. Like the rain
 that day, and the train between us, the ride,
 the voice, the word softly spoken, showing
 you all that we care, are still here, spinning.
 Tiny in our devotion.*

*I remember realizing you did just the same,
 spoke out loud. Looked at my reflection and
 saw that I'm just like you, just like your heart
 pounding, chest heaving. I've never seen you
 run, never seen you smile without a hint of
 irony, never saw the dirty white walls for
 their symmetry. Symmetry because catharsis
 is too big a word But maybe this was wrong.
 you were always right. Looking in that window.
 I'm just like you Just like you, in pieces*

—Richard Lawson, I

A Quaint Old Lady

Ba Ngoai's gruff yet loving and gentle demeanor still faintly appears in my memory. She was never the domestic type, baking cookies and cleaning; Ba Ngoai was an "adventurous old lady." She pampered her beloved grandchildren with her little spiels on philosophical quirks of life; she was the essence of grandmotherly flair.

Going to the Boston Common and feeding the ducks was one of our daily rituals. As we got off at Park Street, she routinely would buy me those \$1 bags of butter-drenched popcorn at a cart in front of the station. We would walk around to the infamous Ming's Market to gather the groceries for the week. I would accompany her through the labyrinthine aisles until I became bored, playing with the 25-cents-toy-and-candy vending machines along with the pack of other disgruntled grandchildren. When their requests for 25 cents to their grandparents were turned down flat, my grandmother would distribute to each child some of the millions of quarters, bulging from her coin purse. Of course, I would strut and proudly announce, "That's my grandmother."

Ba Ngoai was a severe diabetic, but that never depleted *her* never-ending supply of Wrigley's Chewing Gum. After dinner, all seven of the exasperated grandchildren would crawl into her narrow twin bed waiting, fighting, and grappling for the expected green packet. Ba Ngoai would always pretend that she ran out of her supply by painstakingly digging through her countless rosary beads and fragrant herbal medicines in a great mahogany chest. Teasingly, she would always tell these great tales of young Vietnamese children whose teeth rotted and were eaten by baby dragons because they consumed too much candy. To this day I still ponder the subliminal messages that she instilled in my impressionable brain.

From the mahogany chest, a whiff of that strong and pungent leaf oil balm can still be smelled in her bedroom. Ba Ngoai was one of my hand-picked "medical advisors." When I was sick with the flu, she rubbed that dizzyingly nostril-stinging ointment onto my back, expertly brushing it with a quarter in the direction of the bones of the rib cage, as is the practice. Her reassuring and gentle touch always made me feel as if everything was going to turn out just fine.

She had a magical touch while spouting solid advice for my future. The look in her eyes always made me feel special, as if I was one of the most important people in the world. Her spunkiness and generosity were what made her so special. They are what I try to emulate.

—Annette Tran, II

1975
(Cambodia)

we walked without the moon
the owls cried
and the whispering grass was our only comfort
(it was almost as if there were no war—but we knew better)
a light flashed
voices carried
we hid in the tall grass
and my fatherless child lay sleeping in my arms
(it was fear that held our tongues and breath—I hoped it was only fatigue that held his)
we were stopped
The Barrel of the Gun
and one mile short of freedom
(it was powerful—we could taste it—it was in the air)
sweat poured
gold exchanged
lives spared
and we walked without the moon . . .

—Seda Sean, I

I see
Glittering shamrocks
And Irish eyes are crying
They shine and sparkle
As Mommy's do
And I've never felt more Irish.
An acoustic guitar
Strums my eardrum
And my hand grips harder.
I'm trying to hold on to the bench and
Those glimmers of sunlight,
But there's brownness and
Gray everywhere
In there, there's a man
Lying supine and lifeless
And I can only crunch my eardrum down to
Keep the sounds
And stop the flood of feeling.

—Diana Buda, I

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Liberty and Justice For All (Who Can Afford It)

~For George~

He runs his fingernail down his lifeline but stops mid-palm
He already knows his future

Somewhere along the way
It was decided I was white and he was black
All this made a difference
All this was keeping him back and me ahead
And we accepted it without thinking
Twice

And here in the jail cell,
Two days before his de-por-ta-tion
With skin the color of black beans
He is feeling justice in America

Walking black is a crime

Being poor is your fault and if you can't find a lawyer
Who can get out of the mess that wasn't yours to begin with it's still
Your fault and if your eleven-month-old son will never see you again 'cause
You're being deported back to Haiti for a crime you didn't commit well
Who said you had to come here anyway?

He knows he's not the first and with the way things are going
He won't be the last
Black man to be profiled categorized criminalized

With too much time on his hands, he counts his fingers
ten
He hopes his son can survive that many years
In this land of the free

—Nicole Tabolt, 11



The Day I Got Really Sick, Met My Guardian Angel . . .

You ever been really sick? I mean, really sick, where you wake up in the morning and the question isn't *will I be able to make it in today or should I call Dr. Bergstrom and make an appointment* or even have I *told my parents I love them* but something to the order of *where am I and what's happened to my feet OH GOD THEY'RE GONE!*

My feet, of course, were not gone; they, as well as most of my shivering torso, were covered by my quilt. But, man, that was a scary thirty seconds. As soon as I began to attempt to get out of bed to find those feet (and didn't it figure, they were always disappearing on Mondays), I realized that they were still attached securely to my ankles, breathed a quick, shallow sigh of relief, and fell, unconscious, back onto the pillow. Well, sort of. When I awoke an hour later, my face was pressed up against the headboard, and both of my feet were on the floor.

I felt a little better, but, knowing this feeling would pass and still somewhat skeptical as to the status of my feet, I called into work and told the troll on the other end of the line that I wouldn't be able to make it in. The troll, ageless, sexless, thanked me and hung up, leaving me to croak out a "You're welcome" to the dial tone. I guess I was disappointed that s/he hadn't been more skeptical, seeing as I was indeed sick. I flopped back into bed and stared at the ceiling. Sick. I felt like a symphony was washing through my body, something really dramatic in 3/4 time, cymbals crashing, timpani rolling, flutes drilling miles into my ears, trombones making my stomach quiver.

I sat up and there was an echidna sitting in my swivel chair.

Okay, my brain said, *we think that may have been a glitch*. While Mission Control was checking out that possibility, my eyes were storing information, just in case there was in fact an echidna in my swivel chair. I wasn't sure how I knew it was an echidna, as I'd never seen a live one, much less a 5'10" version wearing a New Orleans Saints warmup jacket, faded blue jeans, red Converse sneakers, and chain-smoking Camels. And, just as my brain was reporting the urgent message *Yeah, we're still looking, but it appears that echidna may actually be there*, he spoke.

"I'm Trevor," he said, shoving a cigarette into his snout.

"I'm. . .," I began, but he cut me off.

"Yeah, I know who you are." He smiled quickly to show he wasn't being curt with me. "I'm your guardian angel, and we don't go to the wrong houses. Nice to actually meet you, Mark."

"Ditto," I muttered, sitting up fully in bed.

... And Gained Newfound Respect For Regis Philbin

Trevor stubbed out the cigarette in my desk and lit another. "I'm here," he said, cramming his lighter back into the pocket of the Saints jacket, "because we need a new crank." He leaned back in the chair, expectantly.

I was about to make the typical "Why me?" comment when a fit of coughing seized me, and I grabbed for a Kleenex.

"Let's be honest, Mark. You hate your job. And even if you didn't, you'll never really enjoy your line of work. Or any other line of work."

I shook my head. "Well, I'm just doing this until. . ."

"You're never going to art school, Mark. And it's for the best. You'd hate the people you met; they're all pretentious jackasses anyway."

Not that it really mattered to me, but I raised an eyebrow (which hurt). "Angels can swear?"

Trevor looked at me and blinked, if that's what echidnas do. "In fact, Mark, there is nothing on this earth that can bring you pleasure in the form of a job. Nothing personal, dude, but you're just not cut out for employment. So the Big Guy's decided to make you a crank."

I nodded. Frankly, my brain was too busy triple-checking that yes, there actually was an echidna in my apartment, to assess the reasonability of what Trevor was telling me.

"Now, what that involves is this. You get a piece of the Big Picture. I tell you some stuff, anything you want to know, really. Then I take back those parts that make it believable to other people. We release you upon an unsuspecting populace, you spread a few rumors, you make a few tabloid headlines, people dismiss you as a crackhead. The Big Guy shows his hand a little, and everyone laughs. It's healthy. He gets a kick out of it."

I coughed thoughtfully. "Do I get to say no?"

Trevor chuckled. Or laid eggs. I'm really not familiar with echidna behavior. "Say anything you want. I'm driving this car. For instance, I can tell you right now the purpose of life. You won't like it, and no one will believe you when you repeat it, but if I tell you, it's the truth and you suddenly know the great mystery."

I started to ask, then thought better of it, "So I guess I want to know: is this my fate?"

"Not until yesterday afternoon. One of our better cranks got run down in Manhattan, screaming about little space aliens, got hit by three cabs at once. Nasty business. Anyway, the Big Guy called a meeting, asked for one of us to bring in a new one, and that, Mark, is where you come in."

I already knew my next question. "Will I ever find true love?"

Trevor did the chuckling/egg-laying thing again. "The future is what you make of it, Mark. We just happen to be good at predicting it. You've already found true love. And you dumped her three years ago. Incidentally, your search for true love is responsible for that hacking cough you've developed."

Nuts.

"Go ahead, Mark," he said, reclining. "You're at the most interesting part. Ask away. . . you will only have access to this information for this short time."

I thought about it. "Is there a God?"

A wince. "Wow, He hates being called that. His actual name is Warren, but I think that's a little informal, don't you? You know Him. He's getting bold in His old age. He's got a gig hosting a game show on ABC now."

"Regis Philbin?"

"Well, that's the name He's using. Cute, ain't it?"

"Regis Philbin is God?"

"Warren is doing a lot of that. Used to be, He'd stick to appearing in jars of peanut butter and walking around as an old lady, looking for kindly souls to reward. We always worry He's gonna slip up and say something in *The Voice* and cause a major sonic disruption."

I just stared. I mean, what can you follow that question up with? The first thing that came to mind was, "Which came first: chicken or egg?"

"Egg."

"That's sort of anticlimactic."

Trevor shrugged. "I'll give you the answers; you're the one who puts the crazy spin on them."

Amazingly, I couldn't come up with anything else for a while. I sat in bed and stared at the ceiling, counting the cracks, and searched for a question.

Finally: "Which political party is right?"

"Warren himself is a Republican." I was disappointed, really. "Santa Claus, on the other hand, is a Democrat."

"Santa Claus?"

"Actually, Ted. He's Warren's brother-in-law, and we really didn't want to risk giving him an important job like guardian angel or apostle, so we figured we'd give him Santa Claus. He likes it; it lets him spend most of the year rolling drunk, work a couple days a year -- he also does the Easter Bunny, by the way -- make a nice little stipend."

That made sense. I mean, if you were going to accept that there was a Santa Claus, it was only good management to have him deliver Easter eggs, too.

We talked for about an hour. I found out some things that I've already forgotten, like something about the true significance of the number 666, the best strategy for winning at blackjack, and (I really wish I'd remembered this one) the number of the woman I'd dumped three years ago. He told me the secret to "The Crying Game," which I'd never gotten around to seeing. He told me that God -- er, Warren was a huge Dylan fan but hated the Stones. He told me that there was no heaven, only a large gymnasium-like room where those who had passed on spent their days involved in quiet conversation and playing Freecell on little laptop computers. He told me there was no hell, only a similar room without the Freecell. And he told me, while we were on the subject, that Freecell game #3571 had no solution and that it had been invented by Warren as part of his kid's science project on insanity.

After a while, I ran out of questions and Trevor stood to leave, shaking his quills free from my swivel chair. "It's been a pleasure, Mark. Don't feel guilty about not being able to share with anyone else. And don't take it personally when they call you crazy."

I smiled slightly and waved to him as he opened the door to leave. Then something struck me. Wondering why an angel had to use the door, I asked, "And the purpose of life?"

He seemed to consider this for a moment, then sighed. "To find a job you like and own cats."

"Well, I. . ."

"You're allergic to cats, Mark. Sorry, dude, I warned you." And then he was gone, slamming the door behind him. I heard his quills rustling against the vinyl of the jacket as he walked down the stairs.

I sat there, contemplating my feet. They were definitely there. Smiling, I turned the light off and pulled the blankets up to my chin, impatient to spread the word about my meeting with Trevor. After all, I figured, if I told the story exactly as it happened, who wouldn't believe me?

—Andrew Barr, I

That Boy

It took a chance meeting with a complete stranger to make me realize, and care, that success and happiness in life only come with hard work.

On a rainy, late September morning, I was sitting in the overcrowded bus on my way to school. I felt tired, overworked, and as dismal as the bleak rain that continued to fall outside. My friends sat on either side of me, silent, apparently worried about my unusual depressed behavior. I could not talk to them, since my depression strangled my already tightened throat, making it impossible for me to do anything but cry.

The bus stopped, and a teen-age boy, about sixteen, squeezed his way through the solid wall of bodies, and stopped in front of the three-seater in which I sat. His eyes were mature and full of pain. His right eye was encircled by a scar, and his face appeared older than the rest of him.

"Man, this bus is packed, and it's all smart kids," he was speaking to me, and I looked up, bewildered. He continued, "I feel real stupid on this bus with all you smart ones. Where do you go to school?" I laughed nervously, wary of this complete stranger, and answered him by saying I went to Latin School.

"I can hardly read," he reported ashamedly.

This saddened me. I could hardly believe a school failed to teach the student the basics. How would this boy ever get a good job, or even live happy life?

"Is it real hard, learning Latin?" I realized that this boy was genuinely interested in my experiences and life.

"It's not as hard as I expected," I answered slowly. "I almost like it."

This began one of the most interesting conversations of my life. This strange boy became one of the greatest friends I ever had, and I never even knew his name. He told me he wished that he had been forced to pay attention in school, since it would have helped in the future. I was shocked, and told him how bored I sometimes got, and how I wished that I were stupid. Suddenly, I began realizing what a foolish and immature wish this was.

All too soon, the bus drove into Fields Corner, his stop. He said good-bye, and jumped onto the stairs. At the last moment, he turned towards me, and shouted, "Hey, do good in school! Make up for my failure." The next instant, he was gone, and I never saw him again.

That morning on the bus, I had learned that my life was easy, and a wonderful gift. I was fortunate to be smart, and that was something of which to be proud. This new outlook drove me to try my hardest in whatever I did, and to have a positive feeling, no matter how bad the situation seemed. The strange boy had shown me how much harder people's situations were, and for that, I thank him.

Now, whatever I take a test, write a paper, or even practice my instrument, I think of the boy, and whisper, "I'm doing it for you."



—Elizabeth Sculley, V

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She enters the scene,
Liquid ice, flowing,
Freezing all,
As they stand,
Mesmerized by
The girl in the leopard-print pants.
She stands face-to-face
With my heat,
Hot magma, flaming red, oozing from my being,
Yet she does not melt;
I have been challenged.
She stares,
Daring me to back down;
I cock a mischievous grin;
I like this game.
The girl likes to play with fire!
Sweat streaming down my back,
Frost appearing on her face,
Two forces of nature doing battle.
The crowd encloses us,
Music pumping,
Bodies jumping,
Yet is not able to get too close
To the fire and ice.
Steam soars high,
As my heat collides with her frost.
We are too powerful
For our own good.
Simultaneously we smile,
Eyes locked intently,
And we lift a cautious brow,
Two demonic beings meeting for the first time.
We hold our hands out;
As her ice reaches my flame,
We neutralize each other.
At last I have found a partner in crime,
A friend hidden in the form of a foe,
One who dared enter
My flaming abyss,
One who survived the suffocating heat.
The crowd moves closer,
This time we join the rhythm;
Music pumping,
Bodies jumping,
As the masses of flesh collide.

—Elisângela Almeida, II

Should I Bloop, Nana?

Roll the old film reel projector. Clickclickclickclickclick. Colorful images appear before your eyes. The time? 1995. The place? Katie's basement during a rehearsal for the Lip Synch Contest at school.

"Bloop. bloop," Kelly drones, using her fingers to trace imaginary tears rolling down her cheeks. The other three girls in the room react as expected. Two of them laugh, one a little more hesitantly than the other. The third girl, real tears streaming down her cheeks, hides in the bathroom only after balling up her fists and exploding: "That is not funny!"

The reel ends with a sputter. Darkness.

If you couldn't guess, that third girl was me. Or, and here I digress, in some split universe of time, *is* me.

My tears in this particular instance were caused by a tiff between the girls and me over a choreography issue. Petty, huh? Throughout my life I have been known to cry at the pettiest of things. Not only the pettiest, however. No, that would be too defined. I have cried at the smallest things, the absolute saddest things, the slightly saddest things, and even the happiest things.

As I entered the period of life known as puberty I discovered that for all the crazy arguments and fall outs with friends I had in elementary school, the worst (it seemed) were yet to come. I had my first real fight with my parents; I had my first feelings of separation and isolation from the people I thought were my friends; I thought I fell in love; I had my heart broken. . . The list goes on and on. While all of the issues were very real to me, however, even at the time I realized they were not "important" problems. They should not have tears wasted on them.

My Nana used to chide her children in Italian, and my mother repeats the phrases to me sometimes. I can neither spell out the words, nor can I perfectly pronounce the words of some of the advice given in Nana's native tongue. The best I can do is to repeat the thrilling sounds of my favorite phrase, which, to my American ears, sounds like "arRIV- va quondo beE EVA stah-phAH-la-nava." Loosely translated this means: "Laugh when it rains, because it's going to snow." In other words, don't get upset over what you think is a bad situation, it could be worse. Good advice, Nana.

There was always a lot more going for me than I could notice through my tears. Other problems. Actual problems. Problems that I might someday have to face myself. If I cried over such little annoyances in my life, what would I do when it came to the major issues? I thought I realized this before I remember ever hearing the advice, but Mom says that she herself used to repeat Nana's words when I was younger.

My Nana died when I was a young child, so I never got to know her as well as I wanted to. We have a lot in common though: A love for chocolate, a taste for fine pasta, and the tendency to be gullible. Apparently we also share the same thoughts on sorrow, like "arRIV- va quondo beE EVA stah-phAH-la-nava." I'm sorry, Nana, that I cannot even spell the words that, when repeated, renew an entire new outlook on life. The words that I wish you could hear your daughter saying, because I'm sure she sounds just like you. The words which prove that I'm your granddaughter, since we both think the same way, although I never got the chance to show you.

It had taken me a while after realizing that I shouldn't cry over spilt milk to actually stop doing it. Slowly, my new way of looking at life had begun to form. When Mom gave me this advice it was as if everything I was working on fell into place. If Nana had that same thought (only in more eloquent speech), then how could I go wrong?

My new perspective is one that I share with both Mom and Nana. Nana was the one who strengthened my mother into the beautiful woman she is today; now they both strengthen me. One day they will both help me to strengthen my own daughter. Maybe she'll even learn how to spell the beautiful advice we'll pass down.

Kelly and Katie and I laugh about the "bloop, bloop" incident now. I still "bloop," but not as frequently. I think of Nana now, though. I wonder if she'd consider it justified in one situation or another. I ask myself whether it's raining or snowing. Whether I should cry, or shake it off.

Roll the old film projector. The time? Present day. The place? A city street.

The rain is pouring down hard on the cement. Droplets are bouncing back up to collide with each other an inch off the ground. Passers-by carry umbrellas and walk urgently towards shelter. Except for one girl. She tilts her head back and laughs as the rain hits her tongue. It will be winter soon. She isn't worried though; she'll just make sure to buy some extra blankets.

The reel ends with a sputter, and somewhere Nana smiles.

—Michelle Whitaker, II



The Most Uncommon Common Man

There was Jimmy, the homeless vagabond in Codman Square. His presence was not ominous by any stretch of the imagination, but it was obvious that his image would be always present in the Square. Jimmy was this character where everyone just knew he belonged to the community, regardless that his balanced diet was rotten banana peels and smeared ketchup on the wrappers of McDonald's hamburgers. He was similar to no hobo, the type of guy who was sure to lend a helping hand to the unfortunate, even though most people thought of him as being the unfortunate one. See, Jimmy did not make a living off of laying a guilt trip onto the world, fooling the world into thinking that he was a victim. "My mother and father didn't love me," "I have no family values," "I didn't go to church," "I have no morals," "My teachers were fools," "Those IRS people are fools," "It's cocaine's fault," "It's the police's fault," and "I have no common sense" were excuses that ol' Jimmy just wouldn't let fly with him. He had experienced all of these excuses five times over and had enough ammunition to write several books to pull himself out of this recurring nightmare. Yet, there was no way out for Jimmy. He'd done too many things wrong, said yes when he should have said no, sauntered left when he should have sprinted right, picked up a joint when he should have picked up a pencil. His life was now headed for a chamber of ill repute, a death row without the lethal injection.

I'll never forget when I first met this peculiar fellow. A man no larger than 170 pounds, five foot eight, with dark, majestic eyes that had a dashing hint of

bronze in the center. Hair, uncharacteristically trimmed to a decent perfection, and face untouched by harsh treatment. Yet the coarse, deep lines penetrated the exterior of his jaw resembling sloping hills of a winter wonderland resort. It was the quintessential grandfather features which coaxed me into conversing with this man after slipping change into the bottom of his chipped plastic mug. After spending no more than ten minutes with this man, sharing an experience I doubt I would dare share with any other stranger, I began to realize this man was not a homeless low life, but an intelligent creature that lacked the modern necessities to enrich his already bountiful wealth of knowledge and creativity. In short, Jimmy was hungry and desperately needed someone to talk to. Loneliness was killing his spirit for living more rapidly than hunger, which indeed was ravaging his poor, frail body day by day, hour by hour, hunger-raging minute by food-deprived minute.

If there was one ecstasy in life for Jimmy hands down, it would undoubtedly be smoking. He loved the aroma of tobacco. It filled his lungs with an unruffled cloud, engulfing his lungs with thick smoke. I would have to say that Jimmy was the only person on this Earth that honestly made me believe that smoking was a benefit to one's health. I actually think it kept him alive longer. Just watching his vigor in searching for an unfinished cigarette in the streets was certainly a sight that no man could ever ignore. It was certainly a triumph to find Jimmy's Specialty Cigs, and he would vehemently tell me never to bring him a pack of unsmoked-to-the-butt Winstons. He



enjoyed the hunt through the streets; he said it brought him back to "nature's primitive days." I still happen to think he smoked something other than tobacco.

It's easy to know when someone as insignificant as Jimmy is gone. The ceremonial seat that was reserved for him between Warez's Variety and Smokey's Cigars for the last twenty-two years was unmistakably vacant. The melody of change rattling in his chipped plastic mug was silenced. And the horrid stench of cheap Vodka and ridiculously cheap wine coolers on Jimmy's clothes was no longer a nuisance to the nasal passages. But I believe that the void of Jimmy hit me the most when I saw scattered about his

throne half-smoked cigarettes of all varieties. A tear welled up in my eye. I knew they belonged to Jimmy. And now they belonged to no one. It's amazing how our society concerns itself with how it will be remembered. We often conclude that life is ultimately pointless if in the end the only people that realize we are gone are the slim number that have been close throughout life. How would anyone like to be Jimmy? How would you write his eulogy? How would you call him a friend? If no one else can, I would be honored to give it a half-hearted try. Good-bye, Jimmy.

—Marcus Hughes, II

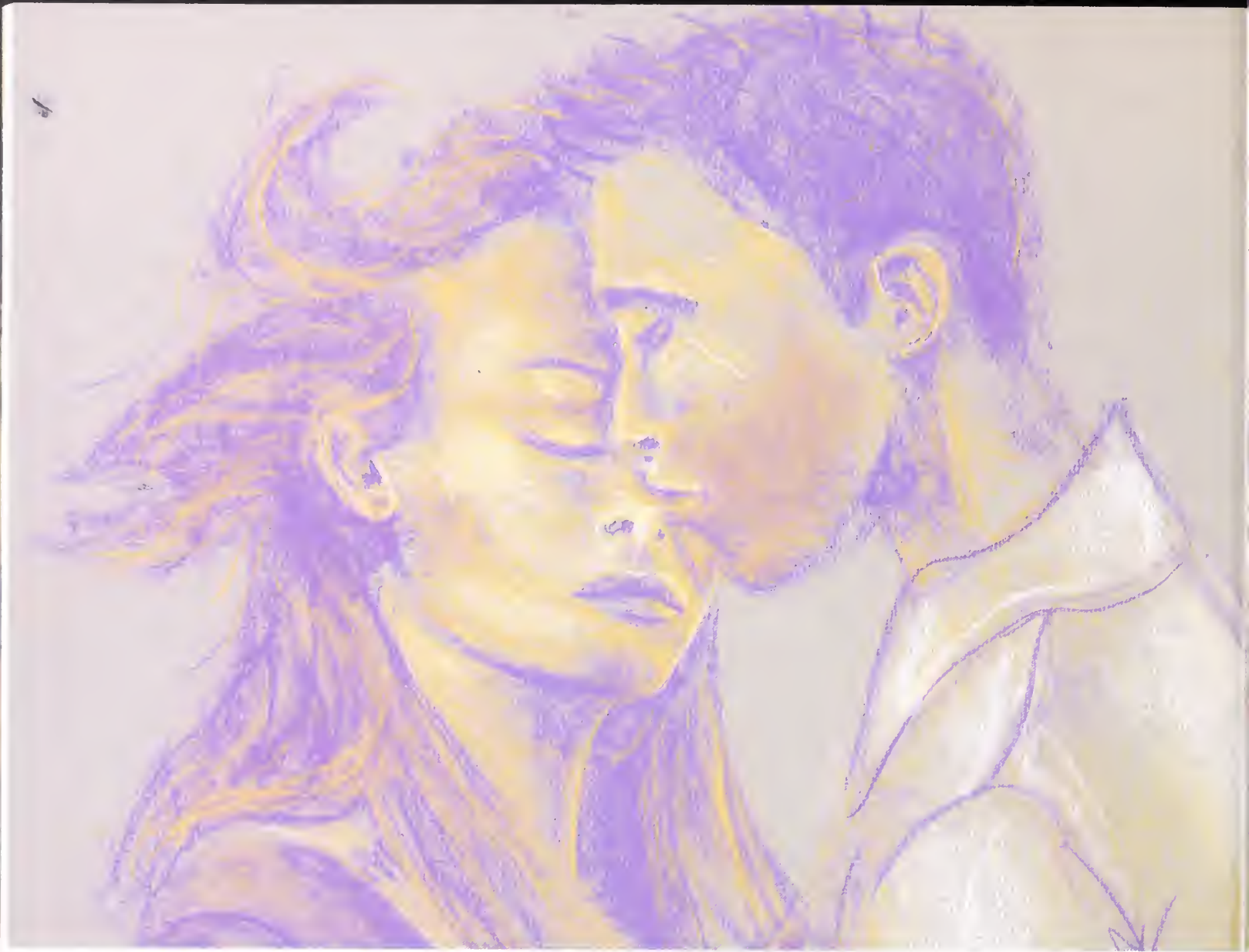


Astral Travelling

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i have a plethora of thoughts floating
about my head
can't be let out til i find
the right voice to speak them in
i'm a sun goddess a snow angel and
a daughter of the winds and rain
not to mention a pyromaniac with
an inclination towards
all things watery and wet
do you suck in your breath when i pull
my silky locks away from my neck?
can we please have an adult conversation
and tell of our deepest dark secrets
without feeling ashamed
dancing to music beats vibrating
against my soul my hips grind as if they have
a mind of their own your hands
come upon me and caress my bones and i think,
"man i just wanna be alone..."
(with you)
i dream of foreign beaches
and marvel at the ravenous need
to see the places
envisioned in my captivating sleep
a made-up heaven i suppose
although nightmares come and go
i want to be held by you all stars long
feel your pulse in synch with mine
and together we create a symphony of contentment
the elements
move me, not one over the other
i am all i am nothing
and i close my eyes.

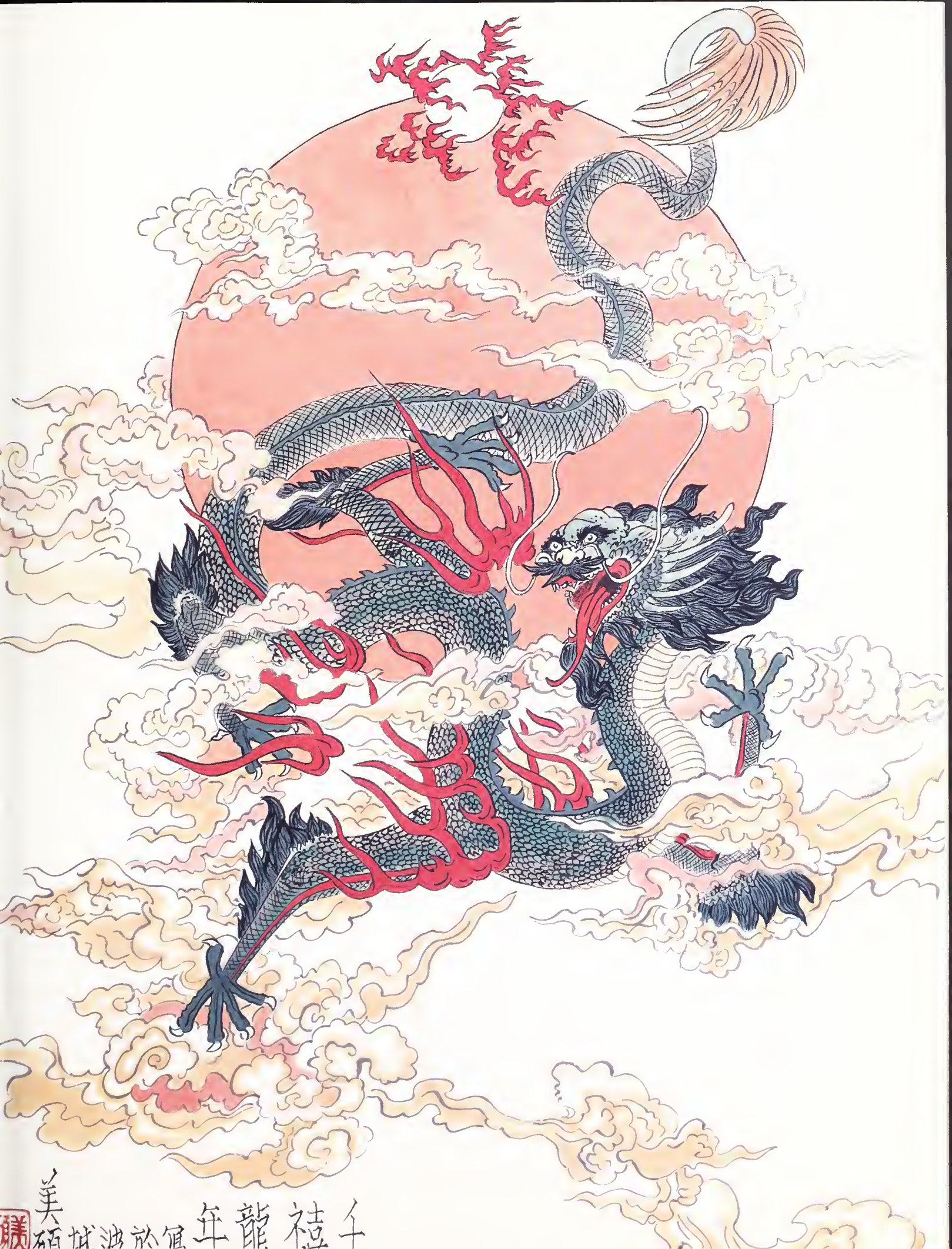
—Erin George, II



First

champagne bubbles on my vertebrae
as you ladle out love to me,
a stranger to love, vagabond
wandering to find you, your truth,
your words
which echo through my soul
until I too am chanting
amorous confessions.
your words, my religion,
I am in awe.
baptize me into Love,
let me feel the words of carnal desire.
preach to me Love
you, my sage aphrodisiac.

—Zoe Weinstein, II



美碩 禧龍年 於海城

Seashells

She sighed to herself as she walked along the beach. If she had had her choice, this day would have been stormy and angry, appropriately dismal with crashing surf and howling wind. Instead, as she walked in the fresh light, the weather promised to be sunny and warm. The waves curled their greedy fingers over the sand to her left, and a row of stilted beach houses stood storklike in a row farther up the beach on her right.

She was the only one at the beach this morning, and her footprints left a solitary trail on the wet sand. Without thinking about it, she began to play with the waves, chasing them as they drew back and fleeing when they surged towards her. Suddenly she stopped. Her face glistened in the opal light of the morning. This was the game she had invented while walking with her grandfather when she was little. He had never played it with her, but she liked to pretend that they had chased the waves together, finally having climbed over the barrier of his broken English and her own fear of not being able to understand his words.

Her grandfather had been here at the beach house for as long as she could remember. There was a time long, long past her memory when he had lived on an island in Greece, but after raising his family in America, he preferred to stay at the beach house and grow his tomatoes. Each year the tomatoes were round as baseballs with gleaming vermilion exteriors. She had been convinced as a child that he polished them each morning before picking the ripe ones.

Despite his heavy accent, their common bond was the sea. No matter how cold the water was, she would always go swimming, exulting in her weightlessness and the feeling that if she could only hold her breath long enough, she could flip and glide through the clear water with the mermaids forever. Her grandfather loved the ocean too, and it was he who came swimming with her, until he became too tired and too sick.

Sick, sick, sick. They said he was sick. Over and over the words pounded in her head, strangely rhythmic with the sound of his beloved ocean beside her. When he first went into the hospital, she had made him a card. Her mother said that they hung it by his bedside. They never let her see him. Instead, she was told that it was for her own good, that she should remember him as healthy and happy at the beach. Then one day, he died.

She had not been back to the beach house since last summer, since before the funeral. The ocean had been calling to her all year but she had not returned until now. For one moment, ankle-deep in the Atlantic, her guilt pressed down on her, guilt for not coming back, guilt for not understanding his accented words, guilt for not having been closer to him, like the grandfathers and granddaughters in stories, who always got along so well and seemed to communicate almost without words. A gull screeched overhead, scolding her for not bringing him something to eat. She glanced at her watch. Soon the early morning walkers, couples, and eager sunbathers would arrive; she must do it now, before anyone

else would interfere. She took the box out of her pocket and removed the shells. One was a spiraling conch shell that he had brought back from Greece, and one was a tiny little snail shell that she had found by herself, the house so carefully built by the slow creature, now empty and quiet.

Cupping them in her hand, she flung them as hard as she could, as far as she could, into the distant waves. Head thrown back to the sky, she whispered the one word she knew of his language, the word most important in the fragile bond between them. *Thalassa, thalassa, ocean. I'm sorry for not being better, Papou, I'm sorry for not understanding.*

She took off her t-shirt and, despite the echoes of all the warnings she had ever received, went swimming by herself. *At this point in a book she thought, the heroine would have been able to say, "And I was not alone; I could feel his spirit beside me."* But she did not feel the familiar presence as she ducked underwater and kicked her legs fluidly, moving without a splash. It was not until she had squeezed out her hair and slipped on her t-shirt, and was walking away from the beach; that the waves seemed to murmur to themselves, *thalassa, thalassa.*

—Alison Damaskos, II



Internal Debate

Will was extremely depressed when he came home. The worst thing that could possibly happen to a fourteen-year-old had occurred. It was the ultimate injustice. Will had finally gotten his braces removed on Monday, but all week *no one had noticed!* He had attempted everything to get his friends to realize the momentous occurrence, and the most he'd gotten was a lot of people telling him to stop grinning like an idiot.

Crestfallen, Will read that needed to be done around had departed for grocery shop-said, "it's like I don't even

Suddenly, just was an amazing puff of his neck in an attempt on. When the man standing the type of appear out of someone's a n d seemed to add to and tie. A pair of upon his nose, and meter stick. The Will.

"Hey, asked Will.

"No," the sprite a manifestation of the sub-left brain, here to advise you the laws that govern the uni-within your mind. I am merely recognize so that you will not

"Well, you aren't doing

"Yes," returned the You see, your previous state-

"Tch," said Will, "explain the logic underlying that conclusion, freak."

"It's quite simple really. Let's start with the past. Let's say there's a man in medieval times that no one ever had any record of. He has been completely forgotten," mused the sprite. "Is this a reasonable assumption?"

"Uh. . .I guess so," Will responded.

the note, which consisted of the chores the house, his mother had left when she ping. Will shook his head. "Sometimes," he exist."

above Will's left shoulder, there blue smoke. Startled, he craned to see what the heck was going smoke cleared, there was a tiny on his shoulder. He wasn't person one expected to blue smoke on shoulder. His crew-cut clean-shaven face the tidiness of his suit thick glasses rested in his left hand, he held a man grinned curiously at

aren't you my math teacher?"

enunciated, "I am Logic, conscious part of your with the knowledge of verse that lies deep taking on a form you will be uncomfortable."

a very good job. You scared the hell out of me."

Lilliputian math teacher, "well, I am only here to help. ment was quite accurate. You don't exist."



"WRONG!!!" screamed Logic directly into Will's ear. Will held his ear, but somehow he could still hear the little annoyance. "All that exists of the past now is what we remember. Who is to say that there is a past outside our own? Like in 1984, the past is alterable. This medieval chap never existed."

"Could you not scream into my ear?"

"Now let us consider the future. Eventually, the Sun will probably supernova, and all records of your life shall be lost. You will not have existed. While you technically exist NOW under this theory, not having ever been essential nullifies the importance of your existence."

"Well, thanks for the depressing news. Drop by again sometime," said Will, but before the strange little being could disappear, there was a puff of pink smoke over his right shoulder, and when it cleared, what appeared to be a miniature Mad Hatter was standing there.

"Can't you guys find some other way to make an entrance?" gasped Will. "That's very disconcerting."

"I am Emotion, a manifestation of the emotions in the deep recesses of your subconscious mind," screamed the Hatter madly, finishing off his statement with an offbeat chuckle.

"Great," complained Will, "why can't I have a normal conscience like everybody else?"

"Don't listen to him," begged Logic. "He's a lunatic."

"You do exist, Will. Can't you feel it? Your fear, your happiness, it all stems from your inner existence, from your animus. Ha- HA!"

"Aren't you supposed to be a devil, or an angel, or something?" asked Will.

"You HAVE to exist. Hoo-ho-ho! Your imagination comes only from you."

"I mean, the Mad Hatter? That doesn't even make any sense."

Suddenly, Logic began to melt.

"NO!" he lamented, "It's not fair! I had the better argument! I had scientific proof! I..." He attempted to say more, but could manage only a strange gurgling sound, as he was now a puddle. The puddle continued to gurgle for a few seconds until it abruptly evaporated, leaving Will's left shoulder vacant.

"I guess this means you won," Will congratulated Emotion.

"Ayup. HA-hee-hee-HA-hoo-HON," said the Hatter, who then proceeded to evaporate into thin air, leaving Will alone once again.

"Next time," Will advised himself, "I'm staying off the Boca burgers." Then remembering the chores he had to do before his mother got home, he quit the room.

—John Ferris, II



New Plantation: Angola Farm

A circus of bars and blue jeans
Of lies and bondage
Dances around us
Our tour guide—a ringmaster of sorts—tries to pull the wool over our eyes
Tries to craft a mirage of equality and justice
In a prison where more than half of the 5 thousand inmates
Will lose hope
 grow old
 and die

But we're not so easily fooled
We actually look into the suffocating 10 x 10 cellblocks
 into the empty eyes of a man on death row
 into the evils of the society outside bars
And see what can never really be hidden

We ask too many questions
But get too few answers
Invisible hands grasp the necks of the prisoners
And leave their responses half-finished
They know that prisons are magic
And walls have ears

The heat is getting to our ringmaster, as are our questions
Beads of sweat stem from his forehead
One of us asks yet another question that lands in the category of The Unspoken
Frustrated, the guide slips up and refers to the employees as free workers
Yes, free workers
Meaning that we did not just spend four hours touring a penitentiary in Louisiana
But a 21st century slave plantation
 That is perfectly legal.



—Nicole Tabolt, II

The Pride Which Stops Me

"What can you do anyway in sheltered youth and our pretension?

Avert our eyes to divert attention.

Only to see the human victims always there to remind us. "

-Operation Ivy

I couldn't go out in the streets and observe the people without homes for my assignment last night.

I hope I can explain to you why it was quite impossible.

I called her the Cupcake Lady. While I was working at the bakery during those scant months, it was common practice for me to entertain and converse with all of the customers, but rarely learn a name. I nicknamed the more frequent visitors based on their pastry or bread choices. She was, by this system, the Cupcake Lady. The Cupcake Lady used to come in with a few pennies, or with no money at all and request cupcakes. We always gave her the cupcakes. Even when she asked for extra ones for her "friends." We couldn't see her friends; only she could.

I'm not actually sure whether Cupcake Lady was homeless or not. No one had ever seen where she left to after she stopped in with us. I never tried to ask her where she came from. She was too proud, I was too nervous. Our situations begged the reverse: me, holding my rank behind the counter in a white apron; she, spilling from the cold street into the doorway with her matted sweater and crazy talk. But despite our social standings it was I who lacked the courage, and she who displayed confidence at all times, even when shuffling back out into the cold streets with her invisible friends, leaving us to our world of heaters, cookies, clanging cash machine, and pictures on the walls.

The first time I met a homeless person was when I was quite young, walking in Boston at night with my parems. The most recent encounter was just last weekend as I walked home from work towards Boylston Street. My contact with these people is always brief. A dollar stuck in a cup. A few exchanged words. Generally they tap into my sense of compassion. I feel pity, and guilt. Most of them remind me of my own vulnerability. However, there is something I have always noticed about all of these people I have met on the streets of Boston. Their pride. Not arrogance, or self-

importance, nor conceit. It's in their eyes. Pride as palpable as their bags of possessions for which they have no drawers.

They are not proud to be homeless, although some of them will tell you they like living on the streets. They are not proud to be beggars, although some of them will guilt trip you for a quarter. They are proud to be alive. Proud that they stayed another night, survived another unpleasant encounter with a self-righteous police officer. Proud to be human.

Sometimes being too emotional, too compassionate can be condescending. Taking artificial interest is just as condescending. I do not go out into the streets and seek out the stories of the unfortunate. To do so would be degradation and a desecration of their ultimate humanity.

If I were to invite the Cupcake Lady, or The Complimentor, or the Flower Woman at Copley out for a sandwich, there is no doubt we would both benefit from the experience. I have oft times fantasized about such luncheons, wishing for the time to make overtures towards them. It is also true that just sitting down with a lonely soul on a heating vent to chat would be pleasant for us both. The enjoyment would be lost, however, if, having terminated the session, I had to walk away with the hollow knowledge that I had orchestrated the whole thing to write a paper on it. This thought would strike at my conscience, revolt my sense of respect for others, and keep me awake at night.

I am a sheltered little white girl from West Roxbury. I have a swimming pool in my backyard, two cars in my driveway, and my own walls to hang pictures on. I have windows to view the world from. But I can't pretend that behind the stereotypes these people are so different from me that they warrant scheduled observation. There's no doubt I will befriend many strangers, some with homes and some without. But not today. Not just so I can write about it and have the most interesting essay. I will not trespass on human dignity.

—Michelle Whitaker, II

Song Lover

I've got freedom songs running through my blood
Tchaikovsky and Chopin wedged between my toes
Folk drips off my fingertips like water
Droplets run down my body and settle on the small of
my back

Bob Marley's in my hair
And I do think that *this is love I'm feel-
ing*

Hip-hop lyrics charge through my skin
Like lowriders that bounce to the beat
of stereos

Salsa and merengue hug my hips
Tango's my lover by moonlight
I don't know the chá-chá-chá but I like
the way it sounds

And yes, I've got jazz for a rainy day and a
sunny day and
For the two a.m. twilight of a computer
screen

I wear red toes shoes everyday

—Nicole Tabolt, II



In Memoriam
John Yessayan '04
1986-2000

MEMORY (for John)

Don't be afraid, friend
Love is waiting
Pain is fading
As you take that
Glorious journey
To eternal rest
Don't be afraid, friend
The pathway kind
Justice blind
And God is watching
Awaiting your arrival
We wait as well
Peace be slow
Such sorrow
As we cry, John
As we sigh, John
As we breathe, John
As you leave, John
Our hearts, be still
Do as you will
But you
Will always be
Remembered.

—Sabine Dumornay, IV



